

SNUG HARBOR IN THE 1890'S

By Gershom Bradford

Would you like to drop back nearly 80 years and linger for a few minutes in that pleasant spot now known as Snug Harbor? Yes?

Well, let us speak of the days in 1896, I was there on my first real job, the handy boy of the coal and lumber company. My pay was \$6-a-week, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., except on Wednesdays when the stores closed at 6 p.m.

The Sweetser building now, was W. S. Freeman's general store; better known as Scott Freeman's. May I prove that it was a general store by a personal social experience. Several years after I had left Snug Harbor, I had an invitation to join a party going to the mid-summer ball in Plymouth. It was a swank affair -- full dress. I had no dress suit. Father got his out of a chest. It would do, but there was no dress shirt. He took off on a long chance for Scott Freeman's. Believe it if you will, he had a dress shirt! Such was his diversity.

Mr. Freeman had a right-hand man -- Ernest Sweetser, who devoted his life to the store. He was so long identified with that establishment that it is a nice tribute to his outstanding diligence and unflinching courtesy that his name is carried on that excellent store today.

By the way, Walter Scott Freeman had a flair for composing verses. Perhaps his name inspired his ambition in this direction.

John A. Irwin's coal and lumber company consisted of the wharf, coal shed, lumber yard and on the street, the office and hardware store. Just south was Josselyn's variety store and next about where the Village Pharmacy stands was Jabez Hatch's blacksmith shop. He had been the cook in one of Duxbury's fishing schooners.

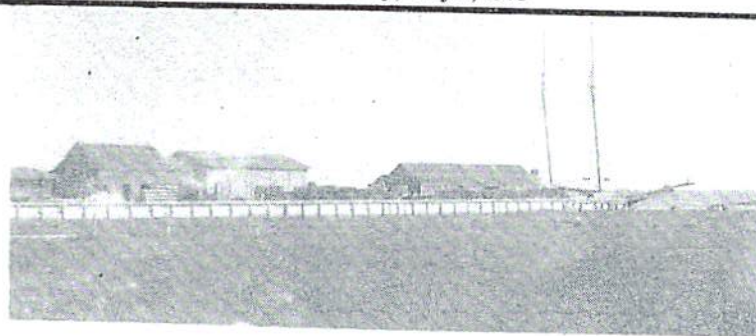
The coal and lumber came in schooners. An arrival was the cause of mild excitement. They were piloted up by Cap'n Spencer Winsor, a retired fishing skipper. His fee was \$5. He hoped to bring a vessel in with a sea wind, but if calm or light airs prevailed, he started up on the first of the flood. It was the old slow way of using the current.

One day Cap'n Craig of the little Plymouth tug Nabby C., threw a line to a schooner down by the Bug, bringing her quickly to the wharf. Poor Cap'n Spencer lost his job as pilot -- a victim of progress.

The coal schooners tied up at the end of the wharf, close to the end of the old coal shed. Running fore and aft in the shed was an elevated railway on which ran a dump car. This railway extended on a trestle out over the schooner. The coal was hoisted in a "bucket" filled by 2 men in the hold. It was raised by a line running through a block (pulley) aloft, thence to a lead block on the caplog of the wharf, and then to an ancient windlass. This device was a wheel about 10 feet in diameter lying flat, a few inches above the ground and turned on a vertical spindle. It's perimeter was scored to receive the hoisting line. The windlass was operated by Sammy Sheldon and his horse going round and round.

They raised the bucket to 2 men on the trestle who dumped it in the car for distribution in the shed. These men were so covered with coal dust as to be unrecognizable, but they wanted the job.

Incidentally, the wharf was earlier known as Sheldon's. Sammy lived in the large mansard house back on the hill opposite Sweetser's.



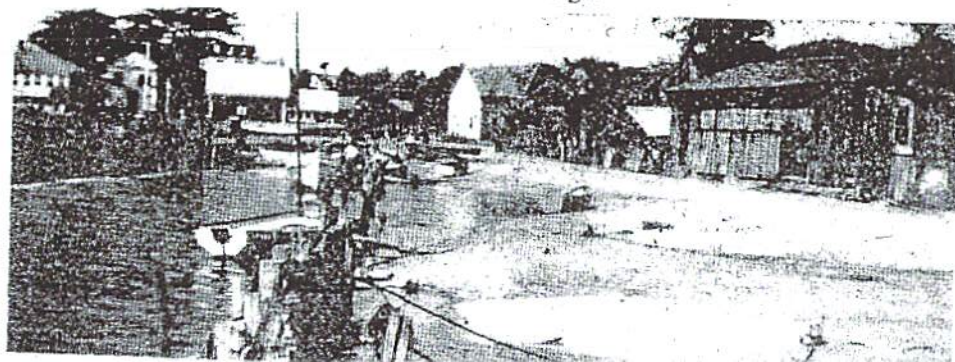
Coal and lumber wharf.

So we had 2 men in the hold shoveling each ton of coal; then Tom Redmond came shoveling a ton into his cart for delivery to a customer; arriving he shoveled the ton into a cellar window. Finally the resident shoveled it into a hod to carry it upstairs for the stove, or into the furnace door. Not all, he shoveled the ashes out in the spring. Think of this when turning up the thermostat.

One day a 3-masted schooner arrived; that was an event. Usually the skippers of the 2-masters came to the office to settle their accounts in working clothes. Quite in contrast, Captain Sullivan of the Balsorah Sherman entered Irwin's office dressed like a shipmaster: derby hat, white shirt and tie. The extra mast seemed to do something for Captain Sullivan. So as we go through life we strive for the prestige of another mast, so to speak.

How do I remember these names? I do not know. Memory is a remarkable and blessed faculty. It stows trivial incidents away in the attic of the mind where they slumber for years. Suddenly one of them will surface like a fish breaking water. There are things that elude our understanding. They are very real, but we cannot see or touch them. The past we draw from the files of memory, but from where does a new thought come?

Last night before I went to sleep "a little fish broke water." It was an exciting sale I made long ago. An elegant carriage stopped in front of the hardware store. I ran out to serve that great diva of the stage -- Fanny Davenport. Of all things, she wanted a tiny pair of wooden paddles, used for making balls out of hunks of butter. For some vague reason balls of butter were then preferred over squares. Surprisingly, we had a pair. The prima donna was delighted. I learned that day even world-wide celebrities sometimes think of little things.



SNUG HARBOR

IN 1960

SNUG HARBOR is an oasis of convenience.

Down in Snug Harbor you can meet a pretty girl, buy her a ring in the jewelry store, have the notice of the engagement printed in the local newspaper, walk up the street and get married, come back and buy clothes for your wedding trip, have the travel agency plan your wedding trip, buy a house from a realtor and later buy toys for the children. You can discuss philosophy with Stuart Huckins, town affairs with Carl Santheson, watch the DYC races in the summer, the Frostbiters in the winter, shop for groceries while your car is getting greased, have a prescription filled, rent an apartment, buy a boat or birdseed, catch eels, dig clams, buy wedding invitations and mail them and gossip with your neighbors.

"You know," one Snug Harborite said snugly--we mean smugly-- "the only thing you can't do is buy canned birds' nest soup or cash a check."

The picture below is of the old Duxbury Coal and Lumber Co. wharf before the 1938 hurricane.